

Lib.

BV

812

-L8

Long

Baptism
in
History

Ch. Hist.

Class

Book

University of Chicago Library

GIVEN BY

Family of E. B. Hulbert

Besides the main topic this book also treats of

Subject No.

On page

Subject No.

On page

BAPTISM IN HISTORY

FEB 21 1908

THE

EAST AND THE WEST.

BY

J. C. LONG, D.D.,

PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY IN CROZER
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

PHILADELPHIA :

AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY,

1420 CHESTNUT STREET.

Class

Book

University of Chicago Library

GIVEN BY

Family of E. B. Hulbert

Besides the main topic this book also treats of

Subject No.

On page

Subject No.

On page

BAPTISM IN HISTORY

17 31 1887

EAST AND THE WEST

BY J. D. DOWD

THE BAPTIST CHURCH IN THE
UNITED STATES

PHILADELPHIA

AMERICAN BAPTIST EDUCATION SOCIETY
100 CHURCH STREET



BAPTISM IN HISTORY
THE
IN THE
OF
EAST AND THE WEST.

BY

J. C. LONG, D.D.,

PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY IN CROZER
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

PHILADELPHIA :
AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY,
1420 CHESTNUT STREET.

BV812
.L8

THE
BAPTIST
PUBLICATION
SOCIETY
OF
AMERICA

HASKELL

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1880, by the
AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY,
In the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

~~~~~  
WESTCOTT & THOMSON,  
*Stereotypers and Electrotypers, Philada.*



## BAPTISM IN HISTORY.

---

I PROPOSE to present a brief view of the testimony of history as to the act of baptism. I hope, either in the facts or in the grouping of them, to make a positive, though small, contribution to the baptismal controversy; and this is my excuse for asking the reader's attention to a subject the very mention of which might warn him to pass it by.

As the Christian church has had a continuous existence and an unbroken tradition, it may seem strange that there ever should have been any dispute as to what was one of its most important and striking rites—a rite which was supposed to secure to the subject of it regeneration and an entrance into everlasting life. The strangeness of the dispute, however, does not seem so great when we remember that

the dispute itself is comparatively recent; that it has been confined to one section of Christendom, and only to one part of that. In the East there is no controversy as to what was the act of baptism; there is no controversy among well-informed Roman Catholics: the controversy is only real among Protestants—that is, only among those who have had no close, unbroken connection with the past. Even among Protestants who do not practise baptism as originally instituted, there are very many who fully agree with the majority of the Christian world as to what the rite was.

The controversy as to the mode of baptism is not so old as the Reformation. Before that time, indeed, sprinkling and pouring had become common in the West, but this excited no controversy. The church had authorized the change, and the people had submitted to it. It was only when men began to wish to return to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures that we hear of dissatisfaction with the current mode of baptism. That this dissatisfaction was not

universal among those who revolted from papal authority is owing to the fact that many of them thought either that the mode of baptism was a matter of indifference, or that it might be lawfully regulated by the church. Calvin thought it a matter of indifference. He said, "It is a matter of no importance whether we baptize by entirely immersing the person in water, or only by sprinkling the water upon him." Inasmuch as "the sign is represented in either," the whole matter should be left free to the churches. Yet he admitted that "the mere term 'baptize' means to immerse entirely," and that "it is certain that the custom of thus entirely immersing was anciently observed in the church." \* Luther does not go so far as Calvin. He tells us that the word "'baptism' means immersion, as when we immerse anything in water so that it is entirely covered by the water," and strenuously argues that immersion should still be practised.† But he did not

\* *Institutes*, art. "Baptism," sec. 19.

† *Opera Latina*, vol. xxix. p. 394, art. "De Sac. Bap."

have the courage, nor did he deem it necessary, to return to the old custom. With Calvin and Luther agree the Reformers generally. Even the Anabaptists, as a body, did not at first attach importance to immersion. It was only after the principles of the Reformation had considerably advanced, and the authority of the church to change an ordinance of Christ began to be denied, that those who practised the changed rite thought it necessary to seek a justification of their practice in Scripture authority or primitive custom. We need not pause to fix the date at which this took place, but then it was that the controversy as to the mode of baptism began.\* It was chiefly confined to immersionists and non-immersionists among English Protestants. The Roman Catholics had, and now have, no part in it. The most recent Roman Catholic history may speak for the Roman Catholics of to-day. Speaking of

\* "Ever since the Reformation and the rise of the Baptists as a distinct denomination . . . the meaning of the Greek word (baptism) has been a matter of dispute."  
—HODGE, *Sys. Theol.*, iii. 527.

the ancient custom, it says: "Baptism, or the immersion of the catechumen to indicate the burial of Christ unto death and resurrection into life, was the necessary condition of entrance into the Christian church."\* The opinion of the Roman Catholic Church is also that of a very large proportion of Protestant Christians. Among English scholars many have no hesitation in declaring that immersion was essential to the original idea of baptism. The almost universal testimony of German scholars is in the same direction.

Only where denominational necessities require it is immersion denied or not freely acknowledged. Such necessities being strongest in America, it is in America that the question of baptism is most warmly discussed and least candidly considered. Any one may notice how differently this subject is treated by German, and even English, and American scholars. Let the reader examine Lange's commentaries as published in this country, and he will see

\*Alzog's *Universal Ch. Hist.*, vol. i. p. 207.

that the German authors uniformly speak of baptism as immersion, and that the American Pedobaptist translators often endeavor to break the force of the statements of the text. One or two examples of this may be given. In the account of the baptism of the eunuch, Lechler, the German commentator, simply states that "Philip baptized him in the water at the road." The American editor inserts two parenthetical remarks to show that the "going down" of the Acts "may refer to the descent from the higher ground to the water," that the going "into the water can determine nothing as to its depth;" and finally, that "*εἰς* (*eis*) may mean 'unto' as well as 'into.'" Of Paul's baptism, Dr. Lechler says, "He was probably baptized in one of the rivers which Naaman had extolled in his day." The American translator thinks it needful to inform us that the "identity of certain streams in the vicinity of the modern Damascus with those of which Naaman spoke is not fully established, nor is there any indication in the present passage that a sufficient quantity of

water to fill a bowl or other vessel . . . could not be found without departing from the house." In the comment on Romans vi. 3, 4, Lange insists strongly on the symbolism of immersion. The American editor—in this case, Dr. Schaff—while holding with Lange, volunteers the information that "the efficacy of the sacrament does not depend upon the quantity or quality of water, nor upon the mode of its application." These anxious and impertinent parentheses are the index of the controversial spirit. Take any number of German scholars and compare their teachings on baptism with those of American scholars of the same standing, and the case is the same. The one party easily and clearly see immersion; the other party do not see it at all, or else so dimly see it that they might mistake it for something else.

I do not remember having met with any attempt to classify Pedobaptist writers on the "mode of baptism," yet such a classification is both easy and suggestive. Their position as to immersion is almost always connected with pe-

culiar views as to the authority of the Scriptures, the powers of the church, or the nature and significance of baptism. Those who practise sprinkling or pouring, while maintaining that the original and scriptural baptism is immersion, almost certainly have very low views of scriptural or very high views of church authority. Dean Stanley belongs to the first class. With him the authority of Christly precept and apostolic example counts for nothing; the mode of baptism is a matter of taste; he would discard immersion because it seems to him "almost barbarous."\* Dean Howson, with some abatements, might be assigned to the same class. He expresses a mild regret that immersion has been changed for sprinkling, and suggests our northern climate as a possible justification of the change.† Of course

\* In his article on "Historical Aspect of American Churches" he speaks of immersion as "undoubtedly the primitive, apostolical, and, till the thirteenth century, the universal mode of baptism in Christendom," and also as "Oriental, strange, inconvenient, and, to us, almost barbarous."

† *Life and Epistles of Paul*, vol. i. p. 439.



our Romish and High Church friends belong to the second class. Holding that the church may lawfully change a rite, they acknowledge no obligation to make their practice conform to that of the apostles. There is also a class who contend that immersion is not baptism at all. This view is always accompanied by a strong conviction of the supremacy of the Scriptures, and of our duty to obey them literally. Those who hold it could not practise sprinkling if they believed that the Scriptures teach immersion, and hence they must deny that the Scriptures teach it. This class is loyal and logical, and has a courage that triumphs over all difficulties; but it is small, and is not likely to grow. The next class is much larger; it includes the great majority of American Pedobaptists. They admit, some of them reluctantly, that immersion was one of several modes of apostolic baptism—not *the* mode, but *a* mode. They put no discredit on the Scriptures; they do not too much exalt the authority of the church; they save and justify their practice

by making the rite general and indefinite. Hence they anxiously argue that baptism is a generic, and not a specific, act—a washing or a purification, and not necessarily an immersion. There is yet another class which it is not quite so easy to define. They are like certain “cheiropterous mammals” spoken of by naturalists: if we look at their wings, we might take them for birds; but if we have regard to their bodies, we class them with mammals. Dr. Charles Hodge (I name him with profound respect for his learning, abilities, and unspotted character) seems to belong to this ambiguous class. He says of baptism that it is “a washing with water. By washing is meant any such application of water to the body as effects its purification. . . . The only essential thing is to make such an application of water to the person as shall render the act significant of the purification of the soul.”\* This is broad and indefinite enough. But in another place we find him laboring to show that, “so far as the New Tes-

\* *Sys. Theology*, vol. iii. p. 526.

tament is concerned, there is not a single case where baptism necessarily implies immersion, and that there are many cases in which that meaning is entirely inadmissible, and many more in which it is in the highest degree improbable." This does not fit in with what goes before. It is only by showing that immersion and sprinkling and pouring were indifferently practised by the apostles that we can prove that baptism is "any such application of water to the body as effects its purification." If there is nothing in the New Testament clearly in favor of immersion, and "many cases" against it, we have no scriptural authority to immerse, and at least one mode of the application of water is excluded from the idea of baptism. When we read Dr. Hodge's definition of baptism, we class him with the most indefinite of the indefinites; but when we see him patiently and laboriously trying to exclude immersion from the New Testament, he seems to have affinity with that small class who feel compelled to deny immersion in order to justify sprinkling.

We venture to suggest that those who follow his plan of treating the subject might make out their case and at the same time preserve their consistency if, after showing conclusively that sprinkling and pouring were practised by the apostles, they should also frankly admit that there are several cases in the New Testament in which immersion was highly probable.

We have not space for further illustrating and justifying this classification, but that such classification can be made is of great significance. It shows that with reference to a simple matter of fact men may easily believe what they wish to believe, and, what is more to our present purpose, that those who have felt no necessity for claiming sprinkling or pouring to be scriptural baptism have not done so, while those who have been pressed by denominational necessities have made such claim. Herbert Spencer might find in this a striking example of the influence of the "theological bias."

If we turn from the opinions to the practice of Christendom, the case is equally strong.

The East has had but one mode of baptism. As Chrysostom baptized in Constantinople fifteen hundred years ago, so the Greek priest baptizes to-day in Athens. There may be non-essential differences in the accessories of the act, but the act itself is in form and substance the same. The testimony of Dean Stanley has frequently been quoted. He says: "There can be no question that the original form of baptism—the very meaning of the word—was complete immersion in the deep baptismal waters, and that for at least four centuries any other form was either unknown or regarded, unless in the case of dangerous illness, as an exceptional, almost monstrous case. To this form the Eastern Church still rigidly adheres; and the most illustrious and venerable portion of it, that of the Byzantine Empire, absolutely repudiates any other mode of administration as essentially invalid."\* When Dean Stanley was in this country, an eminent Baptist minister, acting as the representative of other Baptist

\* *Hist. En. Ch.*, p. 117.

ministers, publicly praised him for the candor of this statement. He must have inwardly smiled to think how easily the praise was won. Perhaps, too, he felt surprised that intelligent Christian men should think it possible for an historian of the Greek Church either to be ignorant of or fail to acknowledge the truth as to the Greek mode of baptism. As well might he be praised for confessing that the earth revolves on its axis, or that the sun is the centre of the solar system. But if the dean did for a moment have a feeling of compassionate surprise at the simplicity of his Baptist admirers, he must have checked it when he recollected that Baptists have not found candor\* to be the distinguishing characteristic of their opponents, and that all men are not as familiar as he is with the customs of the Greek Church.

As Dean Stanley is so often referred to in

\*I do not use candor to mean the quality which prompts a man to tell the truth as he sees it, but the higher quality that enables him to see the truth as it is. I do not impute to Christian gentlemen the lack of candor in the first sense.

connection with this subject, it might be supposed that he stands by himself. Such is far from being the case. If we want more testimony, we might find it in every Eastern traveller, in rituals of the Greek Church, and in the unbroken statements of Greek ecclesiastical writers. Neale, a historian of the Greek Church—not so brilliant, but of fully as much weight and authority as Stanley—says: “The mode of administration of the sacrament is, throughout the whole East, by trine immersion, or at least by trine affusion over the head while the catechumen is seated or stands in water up to his elbows.”\* He goes on to state that according to the Constantinopolitan ritual the priest baptizes the child, “holding him upright and facing the east, and saying, ‘Thy servant,’ etc., at each sentence plunging and raising him from the water.” According to the Coptic ritual, the priest “thrice immerses him, and after each immersion raises

\* *A Hist of the Holy En. Ch.*, p. 949. See whole chapter on “Offices of Baptism,” etc.

him and breathes in his face." The Armenian priest "takes the child in his arms, and immerses him thrice in water as an emblem of the three days' burial of Christ."

Neale refers to no authority for his statement in reference to "trine affusion," and no authority is found for it in the rituals which he quotes. He may possibly have had in mind a statement made by Messrs. Smith and Dwight, missionaries of the American Board. One of these gentlemen writes:\* "According to the rules of the Armenian Church, I believe baptism consists in plunging the whole body into the water three times as the sacred formula is repeated; but the present mode of administering it in Armenia, we were assured by more than one intelligent ecclesiastic, is by pouring upon the head of the child, sitting in the font, a handful of water in the name of the Father, another in the name of the Son; and a third in the name of the Holy Ghost, and then plunging the whole body three times, to signify that

\* *Miss. Researches in Armenia*. n. 305. London ed., 1834.



Christ was in the grave three days." In reporting a conversation with a Nestorian bishop the same writer says: "Baptism (he said) is performed only in churches, and the whole body of the child is plunged three times in the water, because John plunged the Saviour three times in Jordan. When we mentioned, however, that we had heard that they only plunge the body up to the chin, and then pour water three times on the head, his father confessed that they do so, though they plunge the whole body also when there is water enough!"\* The exclamation-point is a part of the quotation; we do not know the exact force of it.

Of course it is mere conjecture that Mr. Neale had these statements in mind. But, however that may be, we may inquire what it is they prove. The first statement brings three things to our knowledge—first, that the Armenian ritual requires trine immersion; second, that trine immersion is the present practice of the Armenian Church; but, third, certain in-

\* *Miss. Researches in Armenia*, p. 382.

telligent ecclesiastics affirm that before the trine immersion water is poured three times on the head of the child, sitting in the water. The second statement assures us, on the authority of a Nestorian bishop, of one thing—that is, that the ordinary Nestorian practice is to immerse the whole body of the child three times in water. We were about to say that the second statement assures us of two things, but, upon re-reading it to ascertain exactly what the second thing is, we found ourselves at fault. The missionary seems to have put a leading question to his Nestorian friends, and both got, and failed to get, the answer he sought. Singularly enough, he tells us nothing on his own authority.

Mr. Badger is a more satisfactory witness. He has given us a book on the *Nestorians and their Ritual*. The office for the administration of baptism is full and explicit. The infant is brought “to the priest standing by the font, who shall place him therein with his face to the east, and he shall dip him therein.

three times, saying, etc. In dipping him he shall dip him up to the neck, and then put his hand upon him, so that his head may be submerged." \* Mr. Badger was a priest of the Church of England, "one of the honorable East India Company's chaplains in the diocese of Bombay." He was twice in Kurdistan, the home of the Nestorians, once in 1842-44, and again in 1850, and had excellent opportunities for becoming acquainted with them. At all events, we may safely trust the Nestorian ritual to tell us what is the Nestorian practice.

We will introduce one more witness, A. N. Arnold, D. D., who says: "The writer has repeatedly seen baptism administered according to the Greek ritual, and in every case it was triple immersion. If, as may sometimes happen, any little portion of the body is not submerged when the child is placed naked in the font, the priest, by a movement of the hand, sends a wave over it. The only instance of adult baptism that came under his knowledge

\* *Nestorians and their Ritual*, vol. ii. pp. 207-8.

was that of a converted Jew, and in his case, the ordinary fonts being, of course, too small for the purpose, a tub or tank was constructed for the occasion and placed in the church. In the course of more than eleven years' service and residence among the Greeks he never heard the slightest intimation of any diversity of views or laxity of practice among them on the subject of baptism, except in reference to recognizing the baptism of Catholics or Protestants." \*

I have quoted so many authorities, not because any one denies that the Eastern Church practises immersion, but simply to give prominence to the fact. It is a fact of which thousands are ignorant, not because it is difficult to ascertain or in any way doubtful, but simply because they have felt no interest in it. So far as my reading and observation go, it has had very little weight in the discussion as to the mode of baptism. Certainly most of those who contend that sprinkling or pouring was the original

\* *Baptist Quarterly*, vol. iv., 1870, p. 83.

rite go arguing on as if the Eastern Church had no existence. This is partly owing to the fact that the East has for centuries had very little influence on the current of Western thought, and also partly to the fact that the Western Church has long been in the habit of regarding itself as the whole of Christendom. Western Christians have had little or no sympathy with their Eastern brethren; they have regarded them as almost as much beyond their communion as the Mohammedans by whom they have been oppressed. And yet the Eastern Church is not farther from the truth than the Papal; it has its home in the lands which witnessed the rise and first triumphs of the Christian faith; for six hundred years it embraced within its fold the great majority of the Christian brotherhood and an immense preponderance of the wealth, learning, and influence of the whole church. Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople were great Christian cities while Rome was yet semi-heathen. It was from the East that the light of the gospel shone forth

in every direction ; and, notwithstanding her terrible overthrow by the Saracens, the Eastern Church has won for Christ the great and growing empire of Russia. She to-day represents “nearly a third of Christendom—one hundred millions of souls professing the Christian faith.” Well does Stanley say that “no theory of the Christian Church can be complete that does not take some notice” of these. Surely their testimony as to an ordinance of Christ ought not to be without weight. A German proverb reminds us that “there are also people behind the mountains.” When immersionists are reproached with being few, they may remember that there are a hundred millions in the East who should be numbered with them.

The orthodox Greek Church, the Armenian, Coptic, Nestorian, all the Eastern churches, practise immersion. In the West it is different ; here the old practice has been almost entirely changed. How shall we account for this ? The difference in the practice of the East and West may be accounted for by the

difference in the history and character of the two regions. The Western Empire yielded to the pressure of barbaric invaders in 476; the Eastern continued to exist until 1453. While the West was coming into contact with new peoples, dividing into new states and empires, passing from civilization to comparative barbarism, and from barbarism to civilization again, the East maintained a continuous existence and uninterrupted civilization under one government. The laws and customs established by Constantine were still in force when the last of the Greek emperors submitted to the victorious Turk. The conservatism of the East and the progressiveness of the West were seen in church as well as in state. In the Eastern Church the Holy Spirit, as stated in the so-called Nicene Creed, has ever proceeded from the Father: in the West he proceeds from the Father *and the Son*; in the East the cup and the leavened bread were always used in the Lord's Supper: in the West the cup for the laity has been omitted and the leavened loaf

has become an unleavened wafer; in the East the patriarchs have remained simply patriarchs: in the West the bishops of Rome developed into chiefs of a great world-embracing theocracy, and, sitting in the city of the Cæsars, were greater than the Cæsars. As she changed in so many respects, there is no wonder that she changed in respect to baptism; yet there was a time when the whole Western Church, except in special well-defined cases, practised immersion, and that in such a way as to show that she regarded nothing else as properly or normally constituting baptism.

Dean Milman dates the history of Latin, or Western, Christianity from the pontificate of Gregory the Great.\* It was in his time that the Western Church entered upon her career of power. In all her activities, whether of work or of worship, she bore the marks of his moulding hand. He modified and developed her ritual, created her music, and, himself a monk,

\* See bk. iii. chap. vii., *Hist. of Latin Christianity*, for sketch of Gregory and his relations to the church.



originated that system of missionary operations which utilized the powers of monasticism and converted a great part of Europe to Christianity. He was the ruling spirit of his age, and in all ecclesiastical matters his advice or command was final. In reference to baptism, his letter to Leander, a Spanish bishop, became the law of the church. Before his time (I translate from a note by the editor of his collected works) trine immersion was supposed to be necessary and of divine institution; but because certain Spanish Arians used the three-fold immersion to signify that there are three divine natures as well as three divine Persons, Gregory taught that the Roman Catholics of Spain might use a single immersion. He says: "We indeed, by our trine immersion, signify the sacrament of the three days' burial, and the drawing of the infant three times out of the water represents the resurrection from a three days' death; but if any should think proper, out of respect to the Holy Trinity, to immerse a person once in the water, there is no reason

why he should not do so; for as there is one substance in three subsistences, it makes no difference whether in baptism we immerse the infant three times or once; the trine immersion typifies the trinity of the Persons; the single immersion the divine unity."\* The effect of Gregory's advice was not to change the general practice of trine immersion, but only to legalize, where it might seem proper, a single immersion. This letter is quoted by many subsequent writers, and five hundred years after it was written it takes its place among the church canons as collected by Gratian.†

In the time of Gregory the Great the Western Church already had its vigorous beginning. It took its exclusively Western character when the Western Empire was restored by Charlemagne. It was now separated from the East in its ecclesiastical as well as political

\* *Patrologia Latina*, J. P. Migne, vol. lxxvii. col. 498. I use the words "immerse" and "immersion" only as the equivalents of *mergo* or *immergo* and *mersio*.

† *Pat. Lat.*, vol. clxxxvii. col. 1826.

functions. The time of the Carlovingian dynasty constituted one of the most brilliant and aggressive periods of its existence. It was at this time that it showed its greatest activity in missionary labors. During this time, too, encouraged by Charlemagne and his sons, learning revived and literature flourished. Every monastery became a school; the very court of the emperor was a school. There are now before me more than thirty volumes of the Latin Patrology, large, double-columned, closely-printed octavos, written during this period. In these volumes are many treatises on baptism. Some of these are parts of general expositions of ecclesiastical matters; some were written at the request or for the guidance of individual bishops, and some at the command of Charlemagne himself. They do not discuss the mode of baptism; they only attempt to explain its significance and the significance of its attendant rites. Baptism in that age was not a simple but a very complex affair. The whole teaching of the church, of doctrine and

salvation and Christian life, was gathered around it. Let us look a little into this matter. Here is a treatise by Leidrad, Bishop of Lyons, one of the oldest and most honored churches of Europe. It is addressed to the Emperor Charlemagne. It begins: "You have thought proper to command me to inform you, either in writing or in person, in what manner I and my suffragans teach and instruct the priests of God committed to our care on baptism and the other rites celebrated in connection with it." \* He goes on to mention some of those things which foreshadowed baptism from the beginning of the world. He finds a figure of baptism in the waters of creation, in the divided fountain of the garden of Eden, in the waters of the flood, and in the waters of the Red Sea. There is a side-reference, too, to baptism in the various wells mentioned in the Old Testament. The blood and water from the Lord's pierced side refer to martyrdom and baptism. Having gone through

\* *Pat. Lat.*, vol. xcix. col. 858.

his rather long introduction, Leidrad explains why the ceremony of exorcism is practised over the person to be baptized; why he receives salt; why he is taught the creed; why his ears and nostrils are touched with sacred oil; why he is anointed on the breast and between the shoulders; what is meant by renouncing Satan and his works. Then the origin and contents of the creed are set forth, with comments on each article; then comes an explanation of the potency and symbolism of baptism; then of the holy chrism; then of the white garments in which the baptized are clothed; then of the Lord's Supper; and finally of the manner in which a Christian should live.\* This treatise of Leidrad's, in its scope and teachings, may be taken as a representative of its class. They all express, and were intended to express, not more the opinions of their individual authors than the teachings of the whole church. They mention rites commonly practised and explain them according

\* *Pat. Lat.*, vol. xcix. cols. 853-873.

to the conceptions of Roman Catholic Christendom.

How did baptism appear to the Western Church a thousand years ago? With all the ecclesiastical literature of the time before us, we ought to be able to answer this question. Leidrad tells us that there were two kinds of baptism—the first, that in which the defilement of sin is washed away in the laver of regeneration; the second, that in which a man by martyrdom is baptized in his own blood. He gives his chief attention to the baptism of water. Water is the only element in the world that both cleanses and gives life. When, therefore, we are baptized in it, we are both purified and made alive. It is not, however, the water alone that accomplishes this, but the water consecrated by the word. The water without the word is simply water; add the word, and it becomes a sacrament. It is the word that purifies us with water (*per aquam*). Baptism is the image of the death and burial of Christ.\*

\* *Pat. Lat.*, vol. xcix. cols. 860–862.

Theodulf of Orleans, a contemporary of Leidrad, breaks out in the language of ecstasy: "O glorious and admirable sacrament, which changes us from sons of wrath to sons of God, from old to new, from foul to clean, in which we are regenerated and purified, and imitate the example of Christ!" He here quotes Romans vi. 3, and continues: "Then we die to sin when we renounce the devil and all his works; we are buried with Christ when, invoking the Holy Trinity, and being immersed three times in the baptismal font, we go down, as it were, into a grave; we rise with Christ when, having put off all our sins, we come up out of the font as out of a grave." \*

Theodulf finds a significance in the font as well as in the baptism itself. He says: "The font also bears a likeness to the sepulchre of Christ." The very steps down into and up out of the baptistery have their meaning. The three down are three nights, and the three up are three days; the seventh step, the bottom

\* *Pat. Lat.*, vol. cv. col. 231.

of the baptistery, refers to Christ, the foundation of all.\*

The testimony of Walafrid Strabo is important, both from his character and from the fulness with which he writes. In his work on *The Origin and Growth of Ecclesiastical Rites* he traces the development of the baptismal office from its primitive simplicity. "We must know," he says, "that believers were first baptized, without any attendant ceremonies, in streams or pools. . . . But in process of time, out of reverence for religion, the splendor of ecclesiastical rites abundantly increased, and thus by gradual developments the celebrations of this mystic laver also grew to larger proportions. Some added the chrism, which no doubt was taken from ancient custom, since in the first ages baptism was accustomed to be supplemented by the imposition of hands, as we read in the case of Peter and John in Samaria.

\* *Pat. Lat.*, vol. cv. col. 233. These passages from vol. cv. may also be found in Raban Maur's work *On Sacred Rites*, *P. L.* vol. cxii. where they appear as original.



. . . Others added exorcism to the sacrament of baptism ; others, the consecration of the font ; others the pouring in of salt or saliva ; others the regular instruction of catechumens ; other instituted a most diligent examination as a preparation for so great a mystery.”\* He goes on to give the law in reference to the formula to be used ; the persons authorized to baptize ; the age at which baptism is lawful ; the course to be pursued when persons are doubtful as to whether they have been baptized at all, or as to the profession on which they have been baptized ; the season at which baptism was to be administered ; and single or trine immersion. On the last point he refers to the letter of Gregory the Great already quoted.

Maxentius, Archbishop of Aquileiæ, has a short but significant treatise, *De Antiquis Ritibus Baptismi*. It is written to Charlemagne. He says : “ When they come to the font they are asked by the priest if they are willing en-

\* *Pat. Lat.*, vol. cxiv. cols. 957, 958.

tirely to renounce the devil, as they had already been admonished. When, in the usual way, they have renounced him, they are questioned a second time about the creed, and when they have answered correctly, all things in order, that they believe the whole creed, they are baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity by trine immersion. And rightly is man, who was created in the image of the Holy Trinity, by the invocation of the Holy Trinity renewed again according to that same image; and rightly does he who fell into death by the third degree of sin—that is, by consent—rise through grace to life by being lifted up a third time from the font.”\*

It would be easy to multiply references and quotations. But any one who will take the trouble to look through the volumes written on ecclesiastical matters during the bright days of Charlemagne and his sons will see that the testimony of a few is really the testimony of all. It is for this reason that I refrain from

\* *Pat. Lat.*, vol. cvi. cols. 56, 57.

giving passages from Haymo's commentary on the sixth chapter of Romans;\* from the commentary of the celebrated Paschasius Radbert on the Gospel of Matthew;† from the controversy of Hincmar of Rheims, the greatest prelate of France, with Gottschalk;‡ from Alcuin, the great schoolmaster, where he insists, in opposition to Gregory the Great, that a single immersion is not allowable;§ and from others. In formal reports to emperors, in handbooks for the instruction of the clergy, in historical treatises, in commentaries on Scripture, in controversies with heretics, in incidental allusions, there is one voice and one testimony.

In the investigation of historical questions one of the most common fallacies results from a concealment or an overlooking of part of the truth. Facts are not always "stubborn things;" they are sometimes the most pliant and accom-

\* *Pat. Lat.*, vol. cxvii. cols. 409-418.

† *Ib.*, vol. cxx. col. 170 and 690.

‡ *Ib.*, vol. cxxv. col. 554.

§ *Ib.*, vol. c. cols. 289, 290.

modating things in the world. By a skilful selection and arrangement of them we can make them say almost anything we please. Hence it is necessary to show not only the facts themselves, but the facts in their relation to other associated facts. We have seen that the Western Church practised immersion in the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, and long afterward. The truth goes farther than this. She not only practised immersion, but nothing else but immersion entered into her conception of baptism. We do not mean by this that nothing else was ever recognized *as a substitute for baptism*, but that whenever the people of that age spoke or thought of baptism immersion alone was present to their minds. Sprinkling and pouring were allowed in exceptional cases, but the fact that they are always spoken of as exceptions is the strongest proof of immersion as the rule. Cyprian, in his letter to Magnus, (the 77th of the Edinburgh translation), informs us that sprinkling was practised in the middle of the third century, and Wala

frid Strabo says that pouring might be allowed in the ninth. But Cyprian's letter also shows that sprinkling was practised only in the case of the sick. It is true he anticipated the position of modern advocates of sprinkling. He contended that baptism signifies cleansing, and that the ceremonial sprinkling of the Old Testament also signifies cleansing, and therefore that sprinkling might produce the effect of baptism. But his speculative views did not change his own practice, and they apparently produced no impression on the general practice of the church. What was irregular and exceptional in the days of the Emperor Decius was also irregular and exceptional in the days of the Emperor Charlemagne. Walafrid Strabo is witness of this fact. Referring to the Spanish custom, he says: "Although the Spaniards decided on a single immersion, . . . yet the older custom [trine immersion] prevailed." He then adds: "But it ought to be noted that not only by immersion, but also by pouring from above, many have been baptized, and

might yet be so baptized if there should be necessity for it; just as we read in the passion of St. Lawrence that a certain man was baptized out of a pitcher. This also happens when the size of adults does not permit them to be dipped in the too small vessels."\* The imminency of death or the smallness of the baptistery might excuse a departure from the prevalent immersion. Such departures, however, do not seem to have been frequent. They were certainly not frequent enough to produce any change or mixture in the current conceptions of baptism. Strabo alone, of all the writers of this period whom I have consulted, mentions the fact that pouring was sometimes used. It is not mentioned in the formal reports to the emperor, nor in any of the expositions of church rites and ceremonies. Several writers particularly describe the different kinds of baptism—that of blood and of water and of the Spirit—but nowhere is mention made of a baptism by pouring. That an

\* *Pat. Lat.*, vol. xcix. col. 862.

exceptional matter not thought worthy of mention by so many writers should have been mentioned by Strabo is explained by the character of his book ; for he was treating of the origin and growth of ecclesiastical rites.

Another fact is significant. Pouring does not, in the slightest degree, enter into the symbolism of baptism. When the significance of the rite is referred to, immersion is always mentioned or implied. Isidore of Seville, the great ecclesiastical authority of Spain, says : "Inasmuch as Christ once died for us, we ought to be once laved in Christ. For if there is one God and one faith, there is necessarily also one baptism, because there is one death of Christ for us, in the image of which we are immersed in the mystery of the sacred font, so that, dying to the world, we may be buried with Christ; and from the same waters we emerge in the likeness of Christ's resurrection, no more to return to corruption as he returned no more to death." \*

\* *Pat. Lat.*, vol. lxxxiii. col. 820.

We need not multiply quotations. There is no place in which baptism is made to symbolize simple purification. It everywhere carries a profounder meaning. It symbolizes our death with Christ, our descent with him into the grave, and our rising with him to a new life. These writers are particular to explain even the smallest thing connected with baptism. They pass by nothing. If pouring had at all entered into their conceptions of the rite, they could hardly have failed to mention and explain it. As they make no mention of it, the inference is irresistible that it was not currently thought of as baptism.

We may go a step farther. The feeling of the church was opposed to pouring even as an exception. In a note on a statement in the *Missale Mixtum*, a corruption of the Mozarabic liturgy of Spain, the editor says: "The rite of immersing was more in use in old times (a modern Roman Catholic writes), and the ancients were in the habit of contemptuously calling those who had received baptism



by pouring *superfusi*, *grabbatarii*, and *clinici*. The Council of Neo-Cæsarea forbids them to be promoted to the dignity of presbyter; a Council held in Paris in the year 829 prohibits those who were baptized in sickness to be chosen among the clergy. Certainly there were not wanting those who doubted whether this mode of baptism was valid or not.\* It is proper to mention that the Council of Neo-Cæsarea objected to the baptism of clinics because they had submitted to it by constraint, under the fear of death; but the letter of Cyprian already referred to conclusively proves that the form of the baptism was considered irregular and by many invalid. An English Council held at Celichyth in 816 forbids pouring and enjoins immersion. This is done in the eleventh canon of that Council as follows: "Also let the priests know that when they administer holy baptism they are not to pour the holy water on the heads of the infants, but

\* *Pat. Lat.*, lxxxv. cols. 465, 466, and Harduin's *Con. Col. Max.*, vol. iv. col. 1301.

let them be immersed in the baptistery, as the Son of God in his own case furnished an example to every believer when he was three times immersed in the waves of the Jordan. It is therefore necessary that this order should be preserved and kept.”\* This is the emphatic judgment of an English Council against the substitution of pouring for baptism. This much is clear, but we do not find in this the full significance of the canon. Why should its adoption be necessary, and how far does its application extend? These questions may be answered in two ways. 1. It may be that the custom of pouring, when extreme sickness did not demand it, was gradually coming in, and that the English Fathers wished to condemn the innovation. If this be so, in the beginning of the ninth century the change from immersion to pouring was already begun; there was no ecclesiastical authority for it, but without authority, and even against authority, priests were practising the more convenient mode.

\* Harduin's *Con. Col. Max.*, vol. iv. cols. 1223-4.

2. On the other hand, there are things in the canon which would indicate that this view of the case is not the true one. The command to immerse is very positive. It says, "Let them always be immersed (*semper mergantur*);" and the command is emphasized both by the example of Christ and the inference drawn from it. Moreover, and what is specially significant, this command is given in connection with the mention of the baptism of the sick. The inference, therefore, is that even their case was not to be regarded as exceptional. If this inference is correct, it would indicate, what I believe to be true, that the church of this time was especially careful to hold to the old ways. This very canon begins with a reference to tradition from ancient times and from the holy Fathers, and the Council of Paris above referred to was called for the express purpose of correcting abuses and bringing the practices of the church into conformity with the Scriptures and church canons. But whatever may be the full force of particular canons, we cannot

go wrong in saying that the indications all are that in the ninth century pouring was *an unfrequent and proscribed exception*.

The teachings and customs of any age are consistent with themselves. There are certain facts so mutually antagonistic that they cannot exist together, and any assertion that they do so exist is at once set aside as exceedingly suspicious or entirely unworthy of belief. The celebrated so-called Decretals of Isidore were ascertained to be false by the application of this principle. Some of them, claiming to be written by early popes, contained words which did not come into use until centuries after their reputed authors were sleeping in their graves. Some of them complained of the invasion and spoliation of church property when as yet the church had no property. Men of the age of Constantine were made to write in the language and spirit of the age of Pepin and Charles Martel. These incompatible things at once showed the Decretals to be forgeries. The same principle of criticism was ingeniously

applied to the Epistles of Ignatius. As he wrote in the early part of the second century, his writings were used in determining the spirit and organization of the primitive church. The force of their testimony was broken in a very simple way. It was said, "No other writer of the Apostolic age, and, indeed, no writer during the whole of the second century, has spoken upon this subject in a style similar to that which Ignatius has employed; and, more particularly, no other writer of this period has *uniformly* employed the terms bishop and presbyter as descriptive of two distinct and separate classes of functionaries, the bishop being of a higher and the presbyter of a lower order; and if so, it follows that these portions of the Epistles ascribed to him did not proceed from his pen, but owed their origin to a later age."\* This reasoning was amply justified by the subsequent discovery of more reliable copies of Ignatius' Epistles, and as they were first known they are now of no au-

\* Cunningham's *Historical Theology*, vol. i. p. 114.

thority. Why may we not apply this same principle to the question of baptism? When, for example, it is claimed, on the authority of certain pictures, that pouring was early practised as a part or the whole of the rite of baptism, having learned from other sources that such was not the case, why may we not conclude either that the pictures do not so teach, or that they do not belong to the age to which they are assigned? I do not propose to enter fully into a criticism of the pictorial representations of baptism, but only to give a hint or two which my studies have suggested toward the explanation of a subject which does not yet seem to be fully understood.

The author of the article on baptism in Smith's *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities* says: "In the picture of our Lord's baptism in the baptistery of St. John at Ravenna, dating probably about the year 450, our Lord is standing in the Jordan, the water reaching to the waist, and the Baptist is standing near, as if upon the bank, and pouring water from

some small vessel on the head of the Lord." I quote this passage because it fairly introduces the subject. The writer's inference from this and other pictures of the same kind is that immersion and pouring were combined in baptism.

This interpretation of the pictures does not favor either immersionists or non-immersionists; if the rite consisted of both immersion and pouring, then either the one or the other would come short of the requirement. As both parties are equally condemned by it, both may consider it with equal impartiality. We pass by the question as to the date of the pictures described, and inquire first into the correctness of the interpretation of them. The interpretation of symbolical pictures is no easy thing. Those who look upon them are apt to carry into them the conceits of their own minds. The picture "from the baptistery of St. John at Ravenna" is before me. There is, indeed, a man standing in the water up to the waist. We may take that man to represent

Christ. There is another man on the shore, who is probably John the Baptist. The second man holds in his hand *something* from which *something* pours or is poured on the head of the first. What that something is the picture does not tell. It may be water or wine or oil, or a dozen other things, for all that we learn from the picture alone. A person who believes that baptism was performed by immersion and pouring would naturally say that it is water. But is it water?

Let us look a little more closely at the picture. There is a dove hovering over the head of the Lord with its beak reaching down nearly to the vessel which John holds in his hand. The dove is the symbol of the Holy Spirit. Is there any connection between the dove and that something in the vessel that flows upon the head? A passage from Raban Maur's book *De Clericorum Institutione* may help us to answer this question. He says: "After the baptized person has come up from the font, he is immediately signed on the forehead with the



sacred chrism by the priest, who at the same time prays that he may be made a partaker of the kingdom of Christ and be called a Christian, from Christ" (the anointed). He quotes the account of the descent of the Spirit on Christ, and continues: "Truly, the anointing of the chrism is well joined to baptism, since the Holy Spirit, who, by the impartation of his own virtue through the chrism, sanctifies believers, descended on Jesus in the form of a dove immediately after his baptism; which thing was typified by that dove which at the time of the flood bore back to the ark an olive-branch with green leaves, signifying that the Holy Spirit, through the anointing at baptism, gives to the faithful the strength of celestial grace." \* In Raban's mind the giving of the Holy Spirit was necessary to the believer's union with Christ, and baptism was necessary to the giving of the Spirit. He quotes the passage: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his," and then adds:

\* *Pat. Lat.*, vol. cvii. col. 313.

“It is clear that no one who is not Christ’s can be made a partaker of his kingdom. It is, therefore, necessary to give immediate help to the baptized person with the anointing of the chrism, that, partaking of the Holy Spirit, he may not be an alien from Christ.”\* The view of Raban in reference to the use of the chrism is substantially that of his age.

The intimate connection of anointing with baptism and the giving of the Holy Spirit makes it appropriate that it should be represented in connection with them. There would be a congruity in such a representation. I am, therefore, inclined to believe that if the pictures referred to, and others of the same kind, are really old and have not been changed by the hand of the restorer, the pouring there represented is a pouring of oil, and not of water. But if we were compelled to admit that the pouring is of water, unless there should be the very strongest proof to the contrary, we should at the same time be compelled

\* *Pat. Lat.*, vol. cvii. col. 314.

to conclude that the pictures, as we have them, are of modern design. For, in the first place, they are peculiar, few in number, and differ from the many pictures of known antiquity in which there is no representation of pouring. In the second place, they do not correspond with the conceptions of their professed age as we otherwise know them. The coming of the Holy Spirit upon the baptized was a familiar conception. The symbolical representation of it in a symbolical picture is, therefore, what we might expect. But the representation in a symbolical picture of a literal pouring of water, of which the age knows, or at least says, nothing, is harsh and incredible.\*

The writer already quoted touches another point connected with our subject. While

\* We must again remind the reader that the explanations of "baptism and its attendant ceremonies" are exceedingly minute and circumstantial. Is it possible that writers who mention and dwell on such things as touching the ear and the nose and the giving of salt would fail to allude to so striking a thing as the pouring of water on the head of the person baptized (a sort of supplemental baptism) if such a thing had been connected with the rit-

maintaining that trine immersion was the usual form of baptism, he claims that pouring was also practised. In proof of this he refers to three cases. The first is that of a sick Jew baptized with sand in the desert; the second is the case in which Athanasius is said, while a boy, to have baptized his young friends in sport by pouring; and the third is the use of *perfusus* in the Gotho-Gallic liturgy. The first two cases did not call for a serious treatment. They are probably mythical; they are certainly exceptional. It is not pretended that they represent the usual custom of the church, or that they even indicate a tendency to exalt pouring or sprinkling to an equality with immersion. No one ever heard that Athanasius did in earnest what he is said to have done in sport. The third case is of more importance. If *perfusus*, as used in a liturgy of the seventh century, means *poured*, that would give pouring a normal and not merely an exceptional standing. The liturgy quoted is found in the seventy-second volume of Migne's *Latin Pa-*

*tology*. The passage referred to is in the 274th column of that volume. Our writer thus translates it: "God, who didst sanctify the fount of Jordan for the salvation of souls, let the angel of thy blessing descend upon the waters, that thy servants, being bathed therewith, may receive remission of sins," etc. The word *perfusi* is translated *bathed*. In another place we are told that a common mode of bathing among the ancients was by pouring, and it is thence inferred that those whom the liturgy speaks of as bathed were bathed by pouring. The case is ingeniously but illogically put. The fallacy of it is at once seen by referring to a parallel case: A common mode of execution is hanging. Charles the First was executed; he was therefore hanged. A common mode of bathing was by pouring, etc. B was bathed; therefore B had water poured on him. The same process of argument that proves that B had water poured on him proves that Charles was hanged. But the fallacy is not the only fault in the case. If we look into the matter,

we see, first, that *perfusi* need not here mean bathed; and second, that it does not mean bathed. (1.) It need not mean bathed, for the sufficient reason that it may mean something else. Virgil, for example, uses it to mean *wash*. He says, "Hence, O Clitumnus, the white flocks often washed (*perfusi*) in thy sacred stream have led the Roman triumphs," etc.\* Sheep are not bathed, but washed in a river. (2.) Having shown that *perfusi* need not mean bathed, we shall now show that it does not mean bathed in the Gotho-Gallic liturgy. It was not a bathing, but an outward washing, typical of the inward purification that was accomplished in baptism. And the context conclusively shows that this washing was not by pouring. In another place the liturgy says: "Sanctify, O Lord, these waters, as thou didst the streams of Jordan, so that those *who shall have descended into this font* may be wor-

\* *Georgics*, ii. vss. 145-8. See also *Geo.*, iii. 445-8:

"Dulcibus idcirco fluviis omne pecus magistri  
Perfundunt, udisque aries gurgite villis  
Mersatur, missusque secundo defluit amni."

thy to obtain pardon of their sins," etc. The going down into the font does not point to pouring. What hinders us from giving to *perfusi* the meaning which Virgil gives to it? Why not translate the passage in the liturgy: "Let the angel of thy blessing descend upon these waters, that thy servants, being washed therewith," etc.? But with this translation the supposed argument for affusion vanishes.

If we compare the Gotho-Gallic with the Gallic liturgy in use about the same time and in the same country, we shall have additional proof that *perfusi* is *washed*, and does not indicate a departure from the one authorized custom. In this Gallic liturgy it is said: "Be present, we beseech thee, at the invocation of thy name. Sanctify this font, thou Sanctifier of the human race. Let it be a place worthy of the inflowing of the Holy Spirit. Let the old Adam that is here buried rise again new; let all that belongs to the flesh die, and all that belongs to the Spirit rise again." \* This lan-

\* *Pat. Lat.*, vol. lxxii. col. 369.

guage implies immersion. All the ideas of both rituals correspond with the conceptions of their age, and mutually agree. We find a washing, a burial, a resurrection. When, therefore, it is claimed that affusion was anything more than exceptional, the claim rests upon no authority. If the author of the article referred to would examine anew his references, I am persuaded that he would feel compelled to change some of his conclusions. In seeking for the mode of baptism at any given time we must ascertain what was then the normal practice of the church, what was the definition she herself then gave to the rite. If once in a thousand times circumstances led to a departure from the usual practice, such exceptional departures would not render the usual practice any the less the baptism of the church. To exalt the exception to the level of the rule would be childish and misleading. Because a sick Jew in the desert was baptized in sand, would we so far dishonor our understanding as to say that in that age baptism was



administered in water *or sand*? If we should ask to-day how the Roman Catholic Church baptizes, the answer would be, By sprinkling. And this answer is none the less true because in the single church of Milan the old form—the form of the revered Ambrose—is practised. If we should ask how the Episcopal Church baptizes, the answer again would be, By sprinkling. And this answer is none the less true and sufficient because an Episcopal minister will occasionally immerse. In the same way we say without qualification that immersion was the practice of the Western Church in the days of Charlemagne. To call attention to acknowledged and explained exceptions and to treat them as normal does not comport with the fairness and candor of Christian scholarship.

It is not strictly correct to say that there was no dispute as to the mode of baptism in the days of Charlemagne. There was a dispute, but it was as to whether there should be a single or a trine immersion. This dispute, however, does not appear to have excited a

very wide interest. Alcuin, so far as I have noticed, stands alone in opposing the permission of single immersion in cases where a trine immersion might give countenance to false views as to the Trinity. I do not propose to trace the steps by which trine immersion became sprinkling or pouring, or, in Dean Stanley's striking language, by which a few drops of water were substituted for the three-fold plunge into the rushing river. The growing prevalence of infant baptism, no doubt, had much to do with it. When the church was making her conquests from heathenism, and grown-up men and women were to be received into her bosom, baptism was regarded as the conscious and willing passage of the soul from life to death that it might rise to a better life. It was preceded by long and patient instruction and by fasting and prayer. The most solemn and joyous days of the year were set apart for it. It added new dignity to the festivals of Easter and Pentecost, and its elaborate and impressive ritual was full of

meaning. But with the prevalence of infant baptism all was changed. There was no longer any special day for baptism; the baptismal service lost its meaning, and the whole rite dwindled and lost its position of public prominence. Besides, that "smallness of the baptisteries" to which Strabo refers, in the passage already quoted, as justifying pouring, became more and more the rule, and the immersion of adults more frequently inconvenient. Now, when the rite was shorn of its glory and it seemed desirable to change it, the rationalizing scholastic philosophers furnished the reasons and the omnipotent Western Church furnished the authority for the change. These reasons may be found in the seventh article, under the sixty-sixth question, in the third part of the *Summa Theologiæ* of Thomas Aquinas. There are three of them, but the three are virtually included in one. The accidents of a thing do not change its substance. The essential thing in baptism is the washing of the body with water. Whether this is done by immersion

or sprinkling or pouring is a mere accident. Therefore such differences in the mode do not destroy the unity of the rite. Here is the principle on which the change was based; and when we have found the principle justifying the change, we need not trouble ourselves with the steps of it. And yet, while justifying the change, Thomas Aquinas furnishes the strongest proof of the old custom. It is in answer to his question, "Is immersion essential to baptism?" that he propounds his views. Why by labored argument maintain the lawfulness of sprinkling or pouring if they had long been allowed by the custom of the church? St. Thomas tells us that even in his day immersion was the more usual and safer mode. He died in 1274.\*

\*See *Works*, vol. xxiv. pp. 232-33. Venice edition. The reader will have a clearer view of the case by reading St. Thomas' whole argument. According to the true scholastic method, he first states the arguments in favor of his proposition and then replies to them: "Immersion in water seems to be essential to baptism, because: (1.) It is said in Eph. iv. 5 there is one faith and one baptism. Now, among many the common mode of baptism is im-

In our investigations we have everywhere met with trine immersion. The Eastern mersion. It therefore appears that there can be no baptism without immersion. (2.) The apostle says, Rom. vi. 3, 'As many of us as have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into his death: for we are buried with him by baptism into death.' But this is done by immersion, for Chrysostom, on John iii, 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit,' etc., says, 'When we submerge our head in water the old man is buried, and being sunk down is hid as it were in the grave, and then he rises new again.' It therefore seems that immersion is essential to baptism. (3.) If there could be baptism without the immersion of the whole body, it might follow, for an equal reason, that it would suffice for any part of the body to be poured upon with water. But this is not proper, since original sin, for the remedy of which baptism is especially given, is in the whole, and not simply in a part, of the body. Therefore it seems that immersion is required in baptism, and that simple aspersion is not enough. Answers: (1.) To the first argument: Mere accidents do not change the substance of a thing. The essential thing in baptism is the washing of the body with water, whence also baptism is called 'a washing' in Eph. v. 26, etc. But it is a mere accident to baptism whether the washing is made in this way or that, and therefore such diversity of mode does not destroy the oneness of baptism. (2.) To second argument: In immersion is figuratively expressed the burial of Christ, and therefore this mode is the more usual and the more praiseworthy. But this is somehow, though not expressly, represented in other modes of baptizing; for, in whatever way washing is

Church now practises it; the Western Church practised it for hundreds of years. The testimony of the church, then, is in favor of trine immersion. Trine immersion is very ancient. It was apparently universal in the days of Augustine and earlier. Tertullian is, I believe, the earliest writer who mentions it. In the 26th chapter of his treatise against Praxeas he speaks of it as if it were a thoroughly-established custom, and bases it on the command of the Lord. In the third chapter of his book *De Corona* he seems to indicate that the three-fold immersion is something in excess of what is required in the gospel. But this passage is obscure. The custom probably arose during

done, the body of the man, or some part of it, is placed under water, just as the body of Christ was placed under the earth. (3.) To third argument: The principal part of the body is the head, in which reside and work all the feelings, both internal and external; and therefore if, on account of the scarcity of water or from any other cause, the whole body cannot have water poured on it, we ought to pour water on the head, 'in which is manifested the principle of animal life.' " Nothing could more clearly show what the old custom was than this argument in favor of abandoning it.

the early controversies of the church with the various classes of Gnostic heretics. Justin Martyr and the writers before him make no mention of it. Neither our Lord nor his apostles taught it. Resting on them as authority, we must practise, not a trine, but a single, immersion.

In concluding this discussion we may say that advance has been made in the controversy as to the act of baptism. Among those whose studies have led them to become thoroughly acquainted with the subject in any of its branches, there is hardly a difference of opinion. All the evidence points in one direction. Whatever road we travel, whether the philological or archæological or exegetical or historical, we arrive at the same point. It cannot but be that the question as to the primitive mode of baptism will after a while cease to be a question. This opinion is based on two grounds. The first is the firm belief that the truth will at last be known and acknowledged. Every new accession of light makes it clearer,

and the reason and judgment of men cannot be darkened for ever. My second reason for supposing that the question as to the mode of baptism will after a while cease to be a question is grounded on what we all see going on around us. The tide of a false liberalism is every day rising higher and higher. However hurtful this may be in many respects, it has the present effect of hushing old party cries and allaying old party animosities. While it teaches us to look with comparative indifference on the positive teachings of the word of God, it enables men to see clearly and to say fearlessly what those teachings are. Its influence is seen in the recent article by Dean Stanley on baptism, in the boldness with which he would change the form of Christian rites, in the confidence with which he speaks of baptism as immersion and the unconcealed scorn which he manifests for those who contend otherwise, and in the freedom with which he acknowledges that infant baptism is not from Christ or the apostles. In all this, Stanley is



the representative of a bold and aggressive party, if not of the spirit of the age.

But when there shall no longer be a question as to what was the mode of baptism, another question will have to be considered. That question will be as to whether it is binding on us, as the subjects of Christ, to do literally and truly what he has commanded us. The Baptists, as the most pronounced representatives of a biblical in opposition to a rationalistic Christianity, will then come into a new and conspicuous prominence. They who would then hold with Christ as their Lord and Lawgiver must likewise hold with the Baptists. This "severe and powerful sect," as Stanley calls them, are something more than sticklers for an empty form. They are the representatives of a great and vital principle; they are a chief party in the question as to whether our conduct shall be guided by a revelation from God or by the deductions of human reason or taste or fancy.

Suppose the views of the Baptists should

prevail and the ordinances of the church should regain their original form and significance—suppose baptism should again be only for believers, and should be the immersion of the whole body in water in the name of the Trinity—ought such a thing to cause one pang of regret to any true Christian or to any lover of Christian culture and refinement? It cannot be denied that the significance of the rite has been greatly diminished by the substitution of sprinkling or pouring for immersion. That profound symbolism which so impressed the mind of the church, the visible representation of death to the world and life to God, has been destroyed. It is one of the strange things in human experience that Christians should feel in their hearts antagonism to a rite impressive in form, profound in meaning, venerable in history, and made sacred by the command and example of our Lord. Again, we ask, would it be a loss or a gain if all the disciples of Christ now, as in the days of Paul, should be buried with him in baptism?



1-2330

BV

308071

812

Long

L8

Baptism in history

1-

2139

308071

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



48 427 358

